Coliseum finally has tenant—unnamed

By ROBERT ULLMAN

After four lonely years, the historic Coliseum in Coral Gables has a new tenant and is expected to open by year's end.

Part-owner Harold Vineberg, who purchased the pink building in 1957 from Holiday on Ice along with Stanley Peal, says he's signed a long-term lease with an unnamed firm.

It's rumored an Ohio-based health club is eyeing the space, but Mr. Vineberg would not confirm that.

The tenant will be named in a month, Mr. Vineberg said, and will occupy the entire building. The new tenant will start $2 million in renovations this summer, he said, with the Coliseum opening by the end of the year.

The plan marks the end of a long effort to revive the colossal, 50,000-square-foot structure at 1500 Douglas Road, which has been vacant since Sportrooms went bankrupt in 1987.

Built in 1927, the Coliseum has been an opera house, ice- skating rink, bowling alley and health club. Mr. Vineberg's first look at the building was memorable — Olympic star Sonia Heine was rehearsing for the Holiday on Ice show.

After Holiday on Ice, the building housed Coliseum Lanes, one of several Dade County bowling alleys Mr. Vineberg operated. Sportrooms followed Coliseum Lanes in 1979 but shut down by 1987.

Mr. Vineberg and Mr. Peal later joined up with Jeffrey Weiss to develop the 3.5-acre site, but the building remained vacant.

Planned renovations include touching up the Coliseum's historic facade, Mr. Vineberg said, but the structure will remain intact as required by the Coral Gables historic preservation board. Mr. Vineberg said he hasn't seen the tenant's plans for the interior, which has 90-foot ceilings.

A recent attempt to lease the building to the state's Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services failed when a state hearing officer found fault with the Coliseum's bid.

As a state-run organization, the HRS received bids from property owners around Dade County.

New tenant will renovate building, owner says.